



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNTY AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS MEET WITH CITRUS GROWERS Asian Citrus Psyllid Found in Tijuana Could Jump Border and Infect Local Citrus Groves

County agriculture officials are working with the local citrus industry to discuss strategies for handling the Asian citrus psyllid, the insect that carries a bacterial disease responsible for citrus greening. The insect was recently discovered in Tijuana, less than two miles from the California border.

Although neither the disease nor the insect has been found in San Diego County or California, extensive surveys of citrus groves are being conducted by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) near the border.

"I want to assure residents and citrus growers that we're working diligently to resolve the latest crisis to impact agriculture in California," said County Agriculture Commissioner Bob Atkins. "California produces 85 percent of the nation's fresh citrus and in San Diego County, citrus, including fresh fruit and trees, is a \$61 million industry, so this insect could do a lot of damage if it was found locally."

The Asian citrus psyllid can damage citrus plants by feeding on leaf tissues, causing distortion and leaf curling. Psyllids leave waxy tubules and honey-dew, on which sooty mold can develop and the mold damages the plant. Psyllids are also an efficient carrier of the bacterium that causes Huanglongbing (HLB), also known as citrus greening, because the fruit does not color properly. Symptoms of HLB include yellow shoots, mottling and yellowing of the leaves. Infected trees are stunted, sparsely foliated and eventually die. The disease also causes twigs to die, leaf and fruit drop and production of small, lopsided and hard fruit. There is no cure for HLB and diseased trees must be removed as quickly as possible to prevent spread of the disease.

The psyllid threatens several varieties of citrus. The pest is originally from Asia. It has been found in central Mexico, the Caribbean islands and throughout Florida since its introduction there in 1998. More recent psyllid infestations include Texas in 2001, Hawaii in 2007 and coastal Louisiana in May 2008. Residents can report suspicious insects to the **CDFA PEST HOTLINE at 1-800-491-1899**. More information on the Asian citrus psyllid can be found at www.californiacitrusthreat.org.

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